

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of February 25, 2013**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Chris Bradley, Selectmen Brad Denny, Charles Morse (absent), John Quinn III, and Gregory Sanders. Also present were Town Manager Rob Lewis, Acting Clerk Ken McCann, Peter G. DeMasi (Fire Chief/Highway Superintendent), James Baraw (Ambulance Supervisor), Linda Barrows (Merger Committee), Stephen Weston (The Veterans' Place, Inc.), Gail Lund (The Veterans' Place, Inc.), Tim Ryan (The Veterans' Place, Inc.), Meredith Birkett (Green Mountain Transit Agency), Tawnya Kristen (Green Mountain Transit Agency), Leslie Matthews (Conservation Commission), Diane Harless, Kreig Pinkham (Washington County Youth Services Bureau/Boys & Girls Club), Michael Smith (Weston & Sampson), Kevin Pecor (Knotty Shamrock), and Kathleen Lott (Merger Committee/*Northfield News*).

A Public Hearing for the purpose of providing written or oral views on the Warned Town Articles to be voted upon by Australian Ballot at the Annual Town Meeting on March 5, 2013, was warned to immediately precede the Select Board's regular meeting. Chair Bradley called the Public Hearing to order at 6:02 p.m. He then opened the floor to any member of the public who wished to discuss the Australian Ballot articles (listed below).

Article 9. Shall bonds or notes of the Town of Northfield in an amount not to exceed three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) be issued for the purpose of the Road Surface Management System (RSMS) Program? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 10. Shall the Town of Northfield vote to authorize the expenditure of an amount not to exceed twenty-one thousand dollars (\$21,000) to fund twenty percent (20%) of the cost to reestablish the Northfield-Montpelier GMTA Commuter Bus Service? (Australian Ballot).

Meredith Birkett, Director of Planning and Marketing for Green Mountain Transit Agency (GMTA), was present to provide background information and answer any questions. She noted that GMTA currently provides to Northfield the Wednesday shuttle service as well as an on-call service to local hospitals, supermarkets, etc. Ms. Birkett added that GMTA had reviewed its service area last year and determined that the priority should be a commuter service that would link Northfield to GMTA's transportation network. The federal government would provide eighty percent (80%) of the funding for this new service and Northfield would be responsible for an annual twenty percent (20%) matching share, which is the \$21,000 that Northfield voters are being asked to authorize this year. The commuter service would operate weekdays with five (5) round trips to and from Montpelier each day. The anticipated bus stops would be Norwich University, Depot Square, Northfield Falls, the National Life building, and Main Street/State Street in Montpelier. There would be a two dollar (\$2.00) one-way trip charge with free transfer service for local bus routes; there would be extra charges for service to Burlington. Ms. Birkett estimates that there would be an average of forty-seven (47) riders each day. Should the matching funds be authorized by the voters, the logistics regarding the route stops, times, etc. would be developed after public hearings so GMTA can get feedback from potential riders. If all goes well, the service would commence in July 2013. Leslie Matthews asked if this would be an annual request that the voters would have to approve. Chair Bradley stated that current municipal policy is that the request would go to the voters for the first three (3) years and then would be put into the Town General budget. Ms. Matthews stated that she supports this proposal since she works in Montpelier and would like to make use of this commuter service. She added that the worsening parking situation in Montpelier makes public transport there even more attractive. Ms. Birkett stated that the previous Northfield-Montpelier commuter service was discontinued in 2004 as it became financially unsustainable. However, as gasoline prices have risen sharply since then and more people are interested in utilizing mass transit, the new service would have a much better chance of success. Stephen Weston, who is the President of the Board of Directors for The Veterans' Place, stated that the facility's twenty-six (26) residents often have discussed their need for public transport to and from Montpelier and Barre in order to access veterans' services, go shopping, etc. Chair Bradley noted the \$2.00 one-way charge and asked if monthly bus passes were available for purchase. Ms. Birkett stated that there were many options for multi-ride tickets at reduced prices. Ms. Matthews asked if Norwich University (NU) has expressed any interest in this. Ms. Birkett stated that there was some communication when this possibility first was being explored. Tawnya Kristen, who is GMTA's Community Relations Manager, added that the service would be especially useful for NU freshmen, who are not allowed to have vehicles on campus. Should the commuter service be established, there would be discussions with NU as to whether it would like to contribute monetarily to its expenses if NU students become major users of the commuter service.

Article 11. Shall the voters of Northfield approve a ten (10) year property tax exemption status beginning July 1, 2013 for the property owned by The Veterans' Place, Inc. and used exclusively for the purposes of that organization? The Veterans' Place is a not-for-profit housing for transitioning veterans. (Australian Ballot). Mr. Weston stated that The Veterans Place is a twenty-six (26) bed facility on Vine Street that has been providing transitional housing for veterans since September 2009. The organization has been very successful since its inception, helping one hundred and twenty (120) veterans to date. Mr. Weston added that they have had a sixty-four percent (64%) success rate in moving these transitioning veterans into their own housing. Three (3) residents graduated from Northfield High School last year. In addition, the residents have been good neighbors in providing hundreds of hours of community service with mowing lawns, raking leaves, shoveling snow, providing school crossing service, etc. On behalf of the resident veterans, Mr. Weston asks the voters of Northfield to support this request. Peter G. DeMasi asked if The Veterans' Place received any federal support. Mr. Weston stated that seventy percent (70%) of its funding came from the federal government, which in turn regularly inspects the facility to ensure that proper housing standards are met. Selectman Quinn asked if any of these funds were threatened by the upcoming federal budget "sequestration." Mr. Weston believes that their funding would be safe this time but added that the facility is operated in an austere manner in case funding does become insecure. Selectman Denny stated that while he has been impressed with The Veterans' Place and its achievements, he is concerned that Northfield already has a limited tax base. With thirty percent (30%) of properties now tax exempt, he is concerned about the impact on taxpayers should this property become tax exempt. Diane Harless asked how much The Veterans' Place pays in property tax each year. Mr. Weston stated that it was about \$16,000. Selectman Denny felt that this was a substantial amount. He also was concerned about the ten (10) year tax exception period, when the usual request is for partial tax exemptions for three (3) years. Chair Bradley stated that if the federal government took proper care of our veterans, it would not become necessary for local governments to take on such fiscal responsibilities.

Article 12. Shall the Town of Northfield vote to authorize the Merger of Northfield Town and Northfield Village in accord with the proposed Plan of Merger approved by the Town Select Board at their meeting of January 21, 2013 with said Plan of Merger to become the charter of the merged municipality as of the effective date of merger, which is midnight on June 30, 2014? (Australian Ballot). There was no discussion.

Article 13. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$6,000 for the Boys & Girls Club of Northfield under the leadership of the Washington County Youth Service Bureau/Boys & Girls Club? (Australian Ballot). Kreig Pinkham is the Executive Director of the Washington County Youth Services Bureau/Boys & Girls Club, which today officially took over management of the reopened Northfield Boys & Girls Club located in the Gray Building. The White River Valley Boys & Girls Club had been overseeing the Northfield Boys & Girls Club in recent years but had to cease operations last December due to financial difficulties caused by reduced federal funding. Mr. Pinkham stated that it was determined that his organization was best situated to operate the Northfield unit, which will be open Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday afternoons through the end of the school year. The club is open to Northfield youths between the ages of thirteen (13) and eighteen (18).

Article 14. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,500 for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program? (Australian Ballot). Kathleen Lott stated that she was standing in tonight for her mother, Meg Donahue Davis, who has written a letter to the local newspaper in favor of funding the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) but was unable to be here tonight. During the 2011/2012 fiscal year, RSVP provided the equivalent of \$33,405 in services to Northfield residents. RSVP also continues to help Northfield residents recover from the effects of Tropical Storm Irene in our community. Ms. Lott and Ms. Davis are asking that Northfield voters continue their past support of RSVP and its efforts.

Article 15. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,200 for Central Vermont Adult Basic Education? (Australian Ballot). There was no discussion.

Article 16. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,200 for the Central Vermont Council on Aging? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 17. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,000 for the Central Vermont Community Action Council? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 18. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,000 for Circle (formerly Battered Women's Services and Shelter)? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 19. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,000 for Good Beginnings of Central Vermont? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 20. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,000 for the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 21. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,000 for the Vermont Center for Independent Living? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 22. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$850 for the People's Health and Wellness Clinic? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 23. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$800 for the Family Center of Washington County? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 24. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$800 for Home Share Now? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 25. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$400 for the Friends of the Winooski River? (Australian Ballot) Ms. Matthews is a member of Northfield's Conservation Commission, which helped circulate the petitions that put this funding request on the warning. She stated that the Friends of the Winooski have been very helpful in the restoration of the riverbanks along the Dog River that were damaged by Tropical Storm Irene. They also are looking into providing a stormwater education program. Ms. Matthews noted that the Dog River is very important to the Winooski River watershed, which explains the good work that the Friends of the Winooski have already done here as well as future plans. Chair Bradley noted that the \$400 request seems rather low considering the amount of work done locally. Ms. Matthews stated that the Friends of the Winooski have been very adept in obtaining grant monies to cover most of their expenses. Mr. DeMasi stated that the trees planted along the river during the restoration process do look very good.

Article 26. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$350 for the Sexual Assault Crisis Team of Washington County? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

There being no other questions or comments, the Public Hearing adjourned at 6:40 p.m. The regular meeting began immediately.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE. The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA. Manager Lewis noted that since the just concluded Public Hearing had been expected to last at least an hour (as in past years), the individuals who had asked to speak under "Public Participation" had been advised not to arrive before 7:00 p.m. Since the hearing ended before then, the Board will continue with other business until their arrival.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. February 11, 2013 (Regular Meeting). Motion by Selectman Quinn, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

V. APPROVAL OF BILLS

a. Warrant #17-13. Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Sanders, to approve Warrant #17-13 in the amount of \$43,219.71. Selectman Sanders noticed a number of highway equipment purchases and asked if they were related to a recent accident involving Town and Village vehicles. Manager Lewis stated that one of the purchases was but the others were due to normal wear and tear. For example, he was surprised to discover that a replacement auger costs \$1100. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

b. Approval of Bi-Weekly Payroll through February 17, 2013: \$54,677.55. Motion by Selectman Sanders, seconded by Selectman Quinn, to approve the bi-weekly payroll in the amount of \$54,677.55. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VI. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

a. Liquor License Renewal Application: Depot Square Pizzeria. Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Quinn, to approve and sign the liquor license renewal application. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

b. Tobacco License Renewal Application: Rite Aid. Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Quinn, to approve and sign the tobacco license renewal application. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

a. Select Board Authorization for Spring Road Posting. Manager Lewis noted that spring road posting is an annual occurrence that begins on March 1 in anticipation of Mud Season. Sixty-nine (69) Northfield roads will be posted and the heavy haulers know when they can and cannot use these roads. There was no objection to this road posting.

- b. **Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) Appointment.** Chair Bradley stated that the Board had received a copy of an email from Zoning Administrator Michele Braun noting that the ZBA had conducted interviews with the three (3) applicants for the vacant position on the Board. It was the ZBA's unanimous recommendation that Doreen F. Lane be appointed to the vacancy. Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Quinn, to appoint Doreen F. Lane to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Selectman Denny, who has known Ms. Lane for several years in her previous role as Manager of the local Merchants Bank, said that she is very worthy of this appointment. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- c. **Recreation Committee Appointments.** The Recreation Committee has recommended that Jason Miles and Scott Amell, who work with Northfield youth through (respectively) Dynamos Soccer and the Northfield Amateur Hockey Association, be appointed to the two (2) vacant positions on the committee. Motion by Selectman Quinn, seconded by Selectman Denny, to appoint Jason Miles and Scott Amell to the Recreation Committee. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- d. **Annual Northfield Town Meeting.** Chair Bradley noted that the Annual Northfield Town Meeting will be held next week on Tuesday, March 5, 2013. Voting on the Australian Ballot articles will take place in the Northfield Middle/High School cafeteria from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and the open session will begin at 10:00 a.m. in the building's Mary Granai Corrigan Auditorium. Manager Lewis encouraged all Northfield residents to turn up for and participate in the meeting. Selectman Denny noted that because of a recent change in state law, the Australian Ballot articles can be discussed during the open session. Chair Bradley also hopes that the public will be able to participate and that they will carefully consider the Town/Village Merger question before voting on this matter.
- e. **Status Reports: Various Projects**
 - 1. **Selectman Charles Morse.** Selectman Denny noted that Selectman Morse is missing his last regular meeting as a member of the Northfield Select Board. (It is assumed that Selectman Morse is attended a meeting of the Mad River Resource Management Alliance tonight). Selectman Denny suggested that the Board should recognize Selectman Morse's service to the community. Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Bradley, to express the Board's gratitude to Selectman Morse for his service on the Town Select Board and as the Northfield community's liaison to the Mad River Resource Management Alliance. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
 - 2. **Northfield Home Energy Challenge.** Selectman Denny stated that the next meeting of the local group formed in response to the Vermont Home Energy Challenge (sponsored by Efficiency Vermont) will be held on Thursday, February 28, 2013, at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room. Selectman Denny noted that a weatherization expert will be on hand and he hopes that all residents interested in reducing their energy costs would be able to attend.

VIII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- a. **Kevin Pecor, Knotty Shamrock: Saint Patrick's Day Weekend Party.** Mr. Pecor, owner of the Knotty Shamrock, stated that his establishment hosted a Saint Patrick's Day party last year (03/17/12) that was very popular but did generate some complaints about noise, trash, etc. He stated that an action plan was developed with improvements designed to make this year's event run smoother. For example, additional staff members will be on hand, a larger area will be available for the party goers, etc. Selectman Quinn asked about the footprint set aside for the party. Mr. Pecor stated that a twenty foot by sixty foot (20' x 60') tent will be rented for the party. This is larger than the twenty foot by forty foot (20' x 40') tent used last year. Manager Lewis asked about the number of port-a-lets that will be on hand. Mr. Pecor stated that there will be two (2), which is the number that the provider (Hartigan Company) recommended for the anticipated crowd. Manager Lewis asked when the live music would cease. Mr. Pecor stated that it would stop at 11:00 p.m., which is the same time as last year. He added that neighbors will be contacted beforehand and their concerns about noise and other matters addressed. Also, the local emergency services have been contacted and they have expressed no objections.

Selectman Quinn asked when the party tent would be set up. Mr. Pecor stated that it will be installed Friday afternoon and taken down the following Sunday. If there is a snowstorm, the tent would be removed as soon as possible after the party's conclusion. In addition, Mr. Pecor has an Outdoor Consumption Permit that he would like approved by the Select Board tonight. Manager Lewis stated that since this permit request was not warned for this meeting the Board cannot take action at this time. After a short discussion, it was agreed that the Select Board would hold a special meeting at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 28, 2013, in the Municipal Building with this permit approval being the only item on the agenda.

- b. Michael Smith, Wesson & Sampson: Fairground Road Bridge Replacement.** Mr. Smith, who is the lead engineer for this project, stated that Manager Lewis had asked him to provide the Select Board with an update on the bridge replacement. He noted that the Town has asked that the new bridge's location be realigned in order to form an intersection with the western end of Lovers Lane. This realignment would improve vehicular safety as well as enhance bridge reliability in case of future flooding. Mr. Smith has provided feasibility analyses to the State for both the old and new bridge alignments that highlight the new design's improved river flow. He also has requested an extension for FEMA funding should bridge construction be delayed until 2014. We now are waiting for FEMA to make a decision on the revised project scope. Mr. Smith added that the last face-to-face meeting with FEMA (02/15/13) seemed fairly encouraging but no decisions were made at that time. Once approval has been received, the construction phase of the project can be put out to bid. There is still hope of completing the bridge replacement this year but this is not a certainty. Manager Lewis added that at that meeting, it was suggested that there might be a quick turnaround on the FEMA decision of between thirty (30) and sixty (60) days. If it turns out to be the latter, a July construction start date is much more feasible. Mr. Smith added that the Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT) suggested that providing an aerial view of the bridge area with hundred (100) year flood data superimposed would be very beneficial to the decision-making process; Wesson & Sampson is preparing this visual aid. Chair Bradley asked if the previous bridge had clearance problems. Mr. Smith confirmed that this was the case, which is why the bridge was washed out twice in recent memory (1973 and 2011). The proposed new alignment and raised abutments would lessen this threat. Chair Bradley then thanked Mr. Smith for his report. Mr. Smith emphasized that he is always available whenever the Board members have questions or concerns.

- IX. MANAGER'S REPORT.** Manager Lewis asked if the Board members would like any clarification of any topic addressed in his written report such as the recent CVRPC/CVEDC consolidation meeting, proposed streetlight improvements in Northfield Falls, the preparations for a tax sale of properties with delinquent taxes, etc. There were no additional questions.
- X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Non-agenda items.** There was none.
- XI. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Selectman Quinn, seconded by Selectman Denny, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes were approved by the Town Selectmen at their meeting of March 11, 2013.

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.